

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 15, 2004

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson  
Secretary  
United States Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to bring to your attention a bill that we have introduced, the *Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2003 (S. 538)*, already approved unanimously by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and passed by the Senate under Unanimous Consent. Unfortunately, the bill has not been acted on in the House, despite the fact that it enjoys strong bipartisan support.

The *Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2002* would authorize funds for the development of lifespan respite programs, or coordinated respite systems, at the state and local levels. The bill is not costly because it does not represent an entitlement to services for all families, but it does allow for identification, coordination, and streamlining of existing narrowly targeted funding streams that will help maximize existing respite resources and even leverage new public and private dollars.

As such, the bill would not result in duplication of current services. In fact, the bill's purpose is to avoid duplication and fragmentation of services. It picks up where other potential respite funding streams available through Administration on Aging (AoA), including the National Family Caregiver Support Program, Maternal and Child Health, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Administration on Children and Families, and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, leave off and coordinates such efforts to help ensure that these allowable funds for respite are being used in the most efficient way for families at the state and local levels.

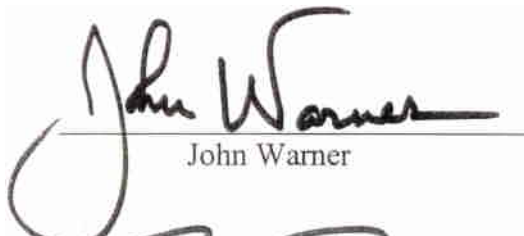
As importantly, the bill would allow states to use funds to recruit and train respite providers and volunteers, to build respite capacity where unmet need exists across the lifespan, especially for family caregivers of individuals of all ages with chronic diseases usually not eligible for any programs, such as Multiple Sclerosis, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), and traumatic brain injury. Finally, the bill would help improve and ensure the quality and accountability of respite services and providers. No other federal program has respite as its focus or would permit funds to be used for these purposes or for all ages.

We applaud the Department of Health and Human Service's efforts through the New Freedom Initiative to implement the United States Supreme Court *Olmstead* decision and for recognizing the need to support family caregivers to fully meet the intent of the ruling. We agree that unrelieved caregiver burden is a major contributing factor to caregiver illness, marital discord and divorce, and expensive and inappropriate institutionalization of individuals with disabilities. **In our own states**, thousands of individuals with disabilities of all ages are on waiting lists for services and supports in the community, including respite care.


Your support of the bill would meet the goals of the New Freedom Initiative. We encourage you to communicate your support of this important legislation to the other members of the majority leadership in the House and on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over the bill.

Thank you for consideration of this important request. Please contact us or lead staff, Robyn Golden (202-224-5650) with Senator Clinton or Chris Yianilos (202-224-2023) with Senator Warner, if you have any questions.

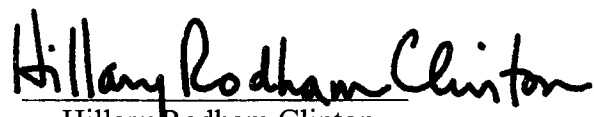
Sincerely,



John Warner



Gordon Smith



Hillary Rodham Clinton



Barbara Mikulski




Olympia Snowe



John Breaux



Susan Collins



Patty Murray

CC: Claude Allen, Deputy Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Josefina Carbonell, Assistant Secretary for AoA

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 15, 2004

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
235 Cannon HOB  
Washington,, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We are writing to bring to your attention a bill that we have introduced, the *Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2003* (S. 538), already approved unanimously by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and passed by the Senate under Unanimous Consent. Unfortunately, the bill has not been acted on in the House, despite the fact that it enjoys strong bipartisan support.

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WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 15, 2004

The Honorable John D. Dingell  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dingell,

We are writing to ask your assistance in reporting a bill that we have introduced, the *Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2003 (S. 538)*, from the Energy and Commerce Committee. The bill has already been approved unanimously by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and passed by the Senate under Unanimous Consent. The House bill has 88 cosponsors from both parties.

The *Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2002* would authorize funds for the development of lifespan respite programs, or coordinated respite systems, at the state and local levels. The bill is not costly because it does not represent an entitlement to services for all families, but it does allow for identification, coordination, and streamlining of existing narrowly targeted funding streams that will help maximize existing respite resources and even leverage new public and private dollars.

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January 15, 2004

The Honorable Michael Bilirakis  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Health  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn HOB  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bilirakis,

We are writing to ask your assistance in reporting a bill that we have introduced, the *Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2003 (S. 538)*, from the Energy and Commerce Committee. The bill has already been approved unanimously by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and passed by the Senate under Unanimous Consent. The House bill has 88 cosponsors from both parties.

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January 15, 2004

The Honorable W.J. Tauzin  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Tauzin:

We are writing to ask your assistance in reporting a bill that we have introduced, the *Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2003 (S. 538)*, from the Energy and Commerce Committee. The bill has already been approved unanimously by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and passed by the Senate under Unanimous Consent. The House bill has 88 cosponsors from both sides of the aisle.

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WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 15, 2004

The Honorable Sherrod Brown  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Health  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
2125 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Brown,

We are writing to ask your assistance in reporting a bill that we have introduced, the *Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2003 (S. 538)*, from the Energy and Commerce Committee. The bill has already been approved unanimously by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and passed by the Senate under Unanimous Consent. The House bill has 88 cosponsors from both parties.

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